

FINNISH NATIONAL
OPERA AND BALLET
2017



OOPPERA
BALETTI



This is a shortened version of
the Annual Report 2017.





Finnish National Opera and Ballet

MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES FOR EVERYONE

The Finnish National Opera and Ballet is a national arts institution, offering opera and ballet performances and other events to Finns of all ages. Guest performances, school operas, TV broadcasts and streaming bring the FNOB to everyone all over the country and even the globe.

In terms of personnel, the Finnish National Opera and Ballet is a medium-sized opera and ballet company. In 2017, there were 550 employees on average, representing 35 nationalities. Finnish and foreign guest artists appear alongside the FNOB's own soloists. The FNOB also employs experts from a wide range of crafts specialities, from shoemakers to metalworkers. Our aim is to create a good and inspiring workplace for all professional groups by being equitable, transparent and fair; by offering opportunities for continuing self-improvement; and by supporting wellbeing at work and work ability.

The FNOB generally stages four new opera productions and three to four new ballet productions each year. Added to these are revivals of old productions, resulting in a programme that is different every week and may include dozens of productions in the course of the year. The FNOB performs both established classics and contemporary opera and dance works, especially new Finnish works. All the opera performances are performed in original language and subtitled in English, Finnish and Swedish.

The FNOB is the only professional opera and ballet company in Finland. It traces its history back to 1911; the Ballet was founded in 1922. The company occupied the tiny Alexander Theatre for decades until the purpose-built Opera House was finally inaugurated in 1993. The main auditorium seats more than 1,300, and there is a studio stage too. The foyers are also used for small-scale performances and free public events.

In Finland, opera and ballet are substantially subsidised out of public funds. In 2017, 72.9% of our funding came from lottery funds administered by the Ministry of Education and Culture, 7.7% from the local authorities in the Helsinki metropolitan area and 19.4% from ticket revenue and corporate sponsorship. Public and private funding help us keep our ticket prices at a moderate level.

YEAR 2017 IN A NUTSHELL

Bravo Club supports artistic activities

The proceeds from the Bravo Club established last autumn are used to support artistic work at the Finnish National Opera and Ballet. Club members are offered customised experiences and a range of benefits only available to the membership.



79

performances outside the Opera house

23

communities



Children's Barber of Seville in Swedish

Children's *Barber of Seville* in Swedish saw its premiere in Pori in September. The translation of the opera originally performed in Finnish in the Art Break for Children was made possible by a grant from the Svenska Kulturfonden i Björneborg foundation to the National Opera.



1,405,000

 visits to our website

Ballet School offers training for dancers

The Ballet School of the Finnish National Opera and Ballet is Finland's only institute of education to offer instruction in classical ballet. In 2017, the Ballet School provided basic art education and professional training for nearly 200 young dancers aged 6 to 18. The School's spring and Christmas shows in Almi Hall attracted over 3,500 spectators.



The best youth opera!

Wonder Boy A received the first prize in the Young Audiences Music Awards competition in Porto, Portugal, which grants awards for the best recent opera projects implemented together with children and young people.

9.5

million euros in ticket revenue

88%

capacity factor in the main auditorium

304

performances with free admission

Crown Princess Victoria visited the Opera House as a guest of honour

As part of Finland's centennial celebrations, Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden visited the Opera House in September to see the *Höstsonaten – Autumn Sonata* opera.



National Ballet on tour

In January, Kenneth Greve's *Snow Queen* was performed in the Royal Danish Theatre in Copenhagen. In April, the National Ballet visited Tokyo and Osaka to perform *Moomin and the Magician's Hat* by Kenneth Greve and to put up a gala show combining classical ballet pieces and contemporary dance. Both visits were part of the centennial programme celebrating Finland's independence.



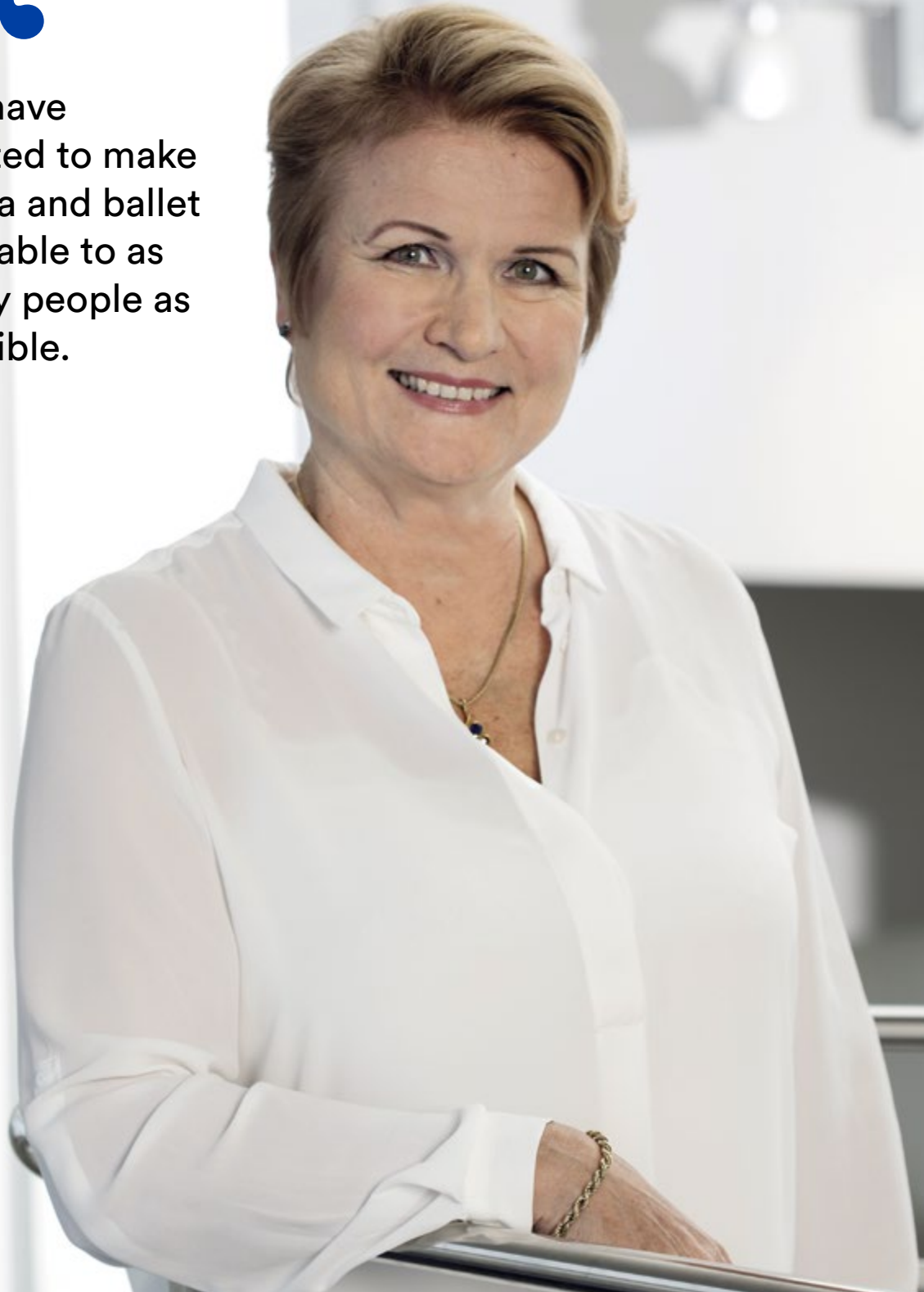
297,380

people attending performances and other events

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We have wanted to make opera and ballet available to as many people as possible.

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General Director's review

ART GENERATES WELLBEING IN SOCIETY

MY REWARDING, DECADE-LONG TERM as the General Director of the Finnish National Opera and Ballet is drawing to a close. I was the first General Director without a background in art. While a few eyebrows were initially raised at that, the system created at the beginning of my term that included a General Director focusing on general management and two Artistic Directors proved workable. As a result, I was able to serve the organisation and create favourable conditions for the employees to excel in their respective roles.

WHEN ACCEPTING THE POSITION OF GENERAL DIRECTOR, my biggest challenges were related to the workplace atmosphere, organisational development and balancing of finances. Working in close collaboration with the Board and staff, we set out to develop the management system and structures while defining in greater detail the job descriptions, responsibilities and skill levels required by staff members serving in the various positions. Today, as the FNOB's finances are balanced and the organisation is working efficiently and professionally, I can pass the baton to my successor with confidence.

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT TASKS we set for ourselves was to make opera and ballet accessible to the maximum number of people in Finland. To achieve this, we have offered interesting and moving art experiences to different audiences by making use of a variety of channels. By modifying the repertoire and providing digitally transmitted performances, we have succeeded in lowering the entry barrier into the world of art.

OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, digitisation has been the most powerful driver of change by greatly improving access to art services. In 2017, the FNOB's radio, TV and streamed productions were enjoyed by about 646,000 listeners and viewers in Finland and other countries. Through OperaVision, the shared network service of European opera houses, people in Finland have had the opportunity to watch dozens of operas free of charge. Our contribution to the performances was *Höstsonaten – Autumn Sonata*, a new Finnish opera that premiered in September 2017.

OF THE AUDIENCES, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE have been particularly close to our hearts. Irrespective of the interests of parents, we have wanted to give children and youth an opportunity to get a glimpse of the world of opera and ballet. Our audience outreach activities range from Art Breaks for Babies to opera works produced and performed by young people themselves.

ART AND CULTURE PLAY A MAJOR ROLE in generating wellbeing for individuals and groups in society. While I was aware of this already when assuming my position in the FNOB, its importance has really been brought home to me over the years. I know that opera and ballet will continue in their efforts to provide high-standard productions in response to the expectations of the various audiences. I hope that despite the strained public finances, art institutions in Finland will be allocated sufficient resources to allow them to operate, renew themselves and offer their services to growing numbers of people.

THE NEW STRATEGY DRAWN UP IN 2017 lists a number of ambitious objectives for the National Opera and Ballet. Of great importance in this respect is the ability to maintain the workplace community's will and capacity for renewal and to commit to common goals. Even though we have achieved a lot, efforts to develop activities must be continued. The new strategy creates favourable conditions for this, pointing the way ahead.

I WISH TO EXPRESS MY WARMEST THANKS to the entire staff, Board, members of the Supervisory Board and the FNOB's partners with whom I have had the pleasure of engaging in constructive and inspiring collaboration during my term as the General Director. My heartfelt thanks also go to the active opera and ballet audience. It has been a real pleasure to share art experiences and engage in an active dialogue with you.

Päivi Kärkkäinen, General Director

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Our new strategy calls for continued efforts to develop our activities.

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A word from the
Chair of the Board

FORGING AHEAD TO THE NEW STRATEGY PERIOD

THE YEAR 2017 was eventful and successful for the Finnish National Opera and Ballet. Finland's centennial played a prominent role in the repertoire, starting with the performance of the *Snow Queen* in the Royal Danish Theatre and culminating in Kenneth Greve's *Land of Kalevala*.

A NEW STRATEGY WAS DRAWN UP LAST YEAR. The strategy process with its numerous workshops and challenger teams was particularly inclusive, which I believe helped staff commit to common values, duties and objectives and so create a sound basis for the implementation of the strategy. As defined in the strategy, our core mission is to create, present and develop internationally acclaimed opera and ballet art. The goal is to make high-standard opera and ballet productions available to all by 2025. In the future, we will monitor regularly both physical and digital availability, the quality and appreciation of the FNOB's productions, the customer experience, the box office receipts from main stage performances, the smoothness and efficiency of processes as well as the advancement in skills levels.

ACTIVE FUNDRAISING HAS BEEN INITIATED in support of the parent foundation and the Opera and Ballet Grant Foundation. The foundations were issued a fundraising permit for the period 1 October 2017–31 January 2019, which allows us to appeal to the public to invite donations. By means of private funding, we can diversify activities even further with new openings and organising tours and visits as well as granting stipends to gifted artists and students.

ADDED FLAVOUR TO THE PAST YEAR was given by the simultaneous recruitment of the new General Director and the Ballet Artistic Director. The appointments of Gita Kadambi as General Director and Madeleine Onne as Artistic Director of Ballet were welcomed by all the stakeholders. Their predecessors General Director Päivi Kärkkäinen and Artistic Director of Ballet Kenneth Greve have created a sound and firm basis for the activities. While every director will make his or her own mark, I do not expect the new directors to feel any urgent need for major changes.

OUR NEAR-TERM PROSPECTS ARE BOTH BRIGHT AND INTERESTING. Naturally, the priorities in the efforts to develop activities are determined by the new strategy, which calls for greater diversity in this respect. We need to offer both new, experimental productions and popular classics. We have had positive experiences from works co-produced by opera and ballet, something that I would like to see continue. Aside from tours and audience outreach activities, we need to lead the way in developing digital services by harnessing the opportunities offered by virtual and augmented reality.

GENERAL DIRECTOR PÄIVI KÄRKKÄINEN RETIRED at the end of 2017. During her ten-year term in office, we earned the trust and appreciation of our stakeholders and the FNOB's finances were balanced. Currently, the artistic level is of high international standard and our management culture is transparent, respectful, responsible and confidence inspiring. I wish to express my heartfelt thanks and respect to Päivi Kärkkäinen for her invaluable contribution to the Finnish National Opera and Ballet.

Leena Niemistö, Chair of the Board

National Opera and Ballet today

ART FOR WIDE AUDIENCES

The core mission of the Finnish National Opera and Ballet is to create, present and develop internationally-acclaimed opera and ballet art. Through these works of art, we wish to reach a wide range of audiences and serve society at large. Although the core of our activities consist of performances held in the Opera House, it is also important for us to reach other audiences and have a presence throughout Finland. We are called upon to shoulder our share of responsibility for the renewal and promotion of Finnish culture. We do so by ordering new works and offering younger generations of artists opportunities for growth and development. Our activities are managed by the Finnish National Opera and Ballet Foundation.

Opera and ballet performances are supported out of public funds to make them available to all. In 2017, 72.9% of the FNOB's funding came from the national lottery funds distributed by the Ministry of Education and Culture; 7.7% from the metropolitan area municipalities of Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa and Kauniainen; and 19.4% from ticket sales, corporate partnerships, etc. Thanks to public and private funding, we are able keep ticket prices affordable.

In 2017, we put up 587 performances, of which 167 were held on the main stage. Additionally, a number of concerts as well as performances and workshops intended for children and young people were organised in other premises, Almi Hall and the foyer.

During the past year, paid and free performances and other activities were staged in 23 localities with 8% of these events held outside the Opera House. All in all, the shows attracted 274,760 spectators with the outside performances accounting for 23,729 of the total. When various audience outreach and other projects are included, the number of spectators reaches 297,380.

The capacity factor of performances in the Opera House was 88%. The sale of season tickets continued to increase exceeding the record sales achieved in 2016.

We celebrated Finland's centennial by organising a large number of concerts as well as opera and ballet performances.

Of the opera shows, an important highlight was *Syyssonaatti – Autumn Sonata* by Sebastian Fagerlund that premiered in September. The leading roles of mother and daughter were splendidly played by Anne-Sofie von Otter and Erika Sunnegårdh. The work was extremely well received both by the audience and Finnish and international critics. Reviewers from a total of eleven countries attended the performances, and the *Financial Times* gave our production full five stars in its glowing critique saying that it was an extremely successful rendition of the film in terms of direction, music and drama. This premiere was made possible with the support of the Swedish Cultural Foundation in Finland.

As far as ballet is concerned, the highlight of the year was *Land of Kalevala*, a co-production of Opera and Ballet choreographed by Kenneth Greve. Additionally, the National Ballet made two extensive visits abroad during the year. In January, Kenneth Greve's *Snow Queen* was performed in the Royal Danish Theatre in Copenhagen. In April, the National Ballet visited Tokyo and Osaka to perform *Moomin and the Magician's Hat* by Kenneth Greve and to put up a gala show combining classical ballet pieces and contemporary dance. Both visits were part of Finland's centennial programme.

The year culminated in *Finland celebrates! Hundred years in major and minor key* concerts around the Independence Day.



Only the Sound Remains



Lady of the Camellias

Successful audience outreach activities continued

A third key field of activity of strategic importance aside from opera and ballet productions is audience outreach. Its objective is to offer art experiences to people who do not otherwise avail themselves of our services. The guidelines for audience outreach activities are determined by Artistic Directors who aim to achieve the same standard of artistic quality as in the works put up on the main stage. The established forms of audience outreach activities were continued in 2017: events and performances were organised for babies, toddlers, children, young people and senior citizens.

The highlight of the year was the selection of *Boy Wonder A*, a school opera produced by lower-level pupils in collaboration with opera professionals, as the best opera in the international Young Audiences Music Awards (YAMawards) competition in Porto, Portugal. *Wonder Boy A* is a music theatre piece written by rap artist Karri Miettinen a.k.a. Paleface and composed by Timo Hietala. YAMawards grants awards for the best recent opera projects completed together with children and young people. A total of 60 works from 17 countries were entered to the competition now held for the 8th time.

Aside from major main-stage productions and National Ballet tours, Finland's centennial was celebrated with the premier concert *Code to Joy* which is part of the *Meet the Masters* concert series. Composed by Kirmo Lintinen, written by Minna Lindgren and conducted by Atso Almila, this concert featured students from the metropolitan area music conservatories playing together with the Opera Orchestra.

During 2017, an extensive joint project called Art Testers was launched by the Finnish Cultural Foundation and Swedish Cultural Foundation which will take all 8th graders to various art institutions to experience and assess art. The project will bring some 54,000 young visitors to the FNOB.

As part of the cooperation with municipalities, the FNOB participated in the School Action Day event held in a sports park in Myyrmäki, Vantaa. A total of 3,800 comprehensive school pupils took part in the event which included a performance by all the participants of a work prepared by the FNOB's *So You Think You Can Muuv?* dance workshop. School Action Day is an initiative launched by the European Commission to promote physical exercise among young people.

Active cooperation in Finland and internationally

As in the previous years, we received a large number of visits by artists from Finland and abroad. Active cooperation with other opera and ballet houses was continued in the context of the Opera Europa organisation as well as among opera and ballet directors in Nordic and Baltic countries. Other forms of activity included the rental, purchase and production of works in collaboration with other opera and ballet companies. The FNOB put up three rented productions while the Tokyo New National Theatre presented our productions of Richard Wagner's operas *Siegfried* and *Twilight of the Gods*. Additionally, we produced Kaija Saariaho's opera *Only the Sound Remains* in collaboration with Nationale Opera & Ballet in Amsterdam, Paris Opera, Canadian Opera Company in Toronto and Teatro Real in Madrid. *The Phantom of the Opera* produced together with the Göteborg Opera was put up in Gothenburg and the *Romeo and Juliet* ballet produced together with the Slovakian National Theatre in Bratislava.

As we are keen to pursue cooperation with other fields of art, a number of events were held in 2017 in collaboration with various art organisations and festivals. The partners included the Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE, Helsinki Festivals, Organ Night and Aria, PianoEspoo, University of Art and Design, Radio Symphony Orchestra, Helsinki Philharmonics, Musica nova and the Music Centre.

During 2017, the 2014 recording agreements with artistic groups were renewed and a partnering agreement signed with YLE on one radio and TV recording per year. It is of great strategic importance for us to extend these agreements as they allow us to make opera and ballet performances available to wide audiences throughout Finland and abroad by means of radio and TV broadcasts, live streaming, recordings and DVDs.

The critically acclaimed *Höstsonaten – Autumn Sonata* by Sebastian Fagerlund was streamed worldwide on YLE, the Opera Platform and the FNOB's Stage24 service. Additionally, the BIS label recorded the work. The FNOB Orchestra conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen recorded the orchestra version of Igor Stravinsky's *Perséphone* for Pentatone.

Stage24, the FNOB's website, continued to gain viewers.

The Opera Platform, a three-year joint project of European opera houses launched in 2015, was followed by a more extensive project called OperaVision for which funding has now been secured up to the end of 2020 under the Creative Europe Programme. In addition to the Finnish National Opera and Ballet, the project involves 30 European opera and ballet houses. They stream select performances free of charge through OperaVision at www.operavision.eu. These streamed performances have been highly effective in reaching audiences in Finland, which has achieved the highest ratings relative to the size of the population. The FNOB's partner in the project is the Opera Europe, a service organisation for professional opera companies and festivals.

In spring 2017, the FNOB's Audience Outreach and CSR Manager Lauri Pokkinen was appointed to the Board of Opera Europa for a three-year term. He is the first opera professional on the board to represent audience outreach activities.

Efforts to develop digital services will continue

An important role in reaching audiences is played by communications, an area in which we have in recent years invested heavily in creating and offering new digital services.

The biggest communications-related project in 2017 was the upgrade of the customer relationship management and ticketing system. After competitive bidding we selected the Tessitura system, the deployment of which was begun in spring 2017. Originally developed for opera houses over 20 years ago, Tessitura is currently being used by some 650 arts organisations across the world. It makes it possible to offer a comprehensive range of services to customers and permits seamless integration of e-sales with online services and digital customer communications. With Tessitura, we hope to be able to identify customers more efficiently than in the past, which, in turn, will permit individual service and communications that are of interest and relevance to the recipient.

The new system will be fully deployed during spring 2018. It will serve as the exclusive channel for ticket sales as of the beginning of the 2018–2019 season cooperation with Lippupiste in the sale of tickets will be discontinued.

Streamlining will support the objective of making opera and ballet available to all. The virtual Stage24 service available on our website provides live and recorded performances that can be viewed on demand in Finland and abroad. In 2017, streamed transmissions reached about 190,000 viewers in Finland and other countries while Stage24 content was downloaded over 250,000 times. In the course of the year, we produced numerous Behind the Scenes videos, trailers, articles and podcasts. All this material is available free of charge.

By the end of the year, the online service attracted 1,405,000 visits (up 6% on 2016). Our objective is to provide a seamless, personalised service path and unrivalled customer experience. Further development of digital services is part of these efforts.

More diversified fundraising

Established in 2016, the fundraising team seeks to develop corporate partnerships and donor relations on a long-term basis. By increasing in-house revenues through fundraising activities, we are preparing for potential cutbacks in public funding in the coming years.

Helsingin Sanomat and the Varma Pension Insurance Company continued to serve as our principal partners in 2017. Kalevala Jewellery contributed as a partner to the *Land of Kalevala* production that premiered in November. As part of this partnership, the company designed a new necklace inspired by the work. Finnair, in turn, served as a

partner on the National Ballet's tour of Japan in April. At the same time, we are actively engaged in negotiations with potential new partners.

We have approached a number of foundations to enable the FNOB to expand its range of service in Swedish. The first such project was the Swedish rendition of the originally Finnish *Barber of Seville* specifically tailored for children and co-funded by the Svenska Kulturfonden i Björneborg foundation. *Knattarnas konststund: Barberaren i Sevilla* was put up in Pori in September.

The fundraising team is supported in its efforts by a fundraising council consisting of the friends of opera and ballet who represent various walks of life. In 2017, the members of the fundraising council were Leena Alahuhta; Ansa Fagernäs; Leena Linnainmaa, Deputy CEO, LL.M.; Petri Niemisvirta, CEO; Annika Nyberg-Frankenhaeuser, Media Professional; Eira Palin-Lehtinen, LL.M.; Urs Pennanen; Kaija Pöysti, Partner; Jorma Terentjeff, CEO; Pertti Torstila, Ambassador, Chairman; Jari Tuovinen, Partner, Chair of the Board; and Ilkka Tykkyläinen, CEO.

In autumn 2017, we established a customer club called *Bravo* whose members are offered an extensive range of services. All revenues from the club are used for supporting artistic activities.

The future objective is to manage the existing partnerships more actively while at the same time establishing new partnering and donor relations with companies, foundations and private individuals. The Finnish National Opera and Ballet and the Opera and Ballet Grant Foundation were issued with a fundraising permit for the period 1 October 2017–31 January 2019. It will enable public fundraising with the first campaign scheduled to start in spring 2018.

The objective is to create a distinctive fundraising model which allows corporate partners and donors to feel included in the opera and ballet family. As members of Opera Europa's Fundraising Forum, we seek to intensify international cooperation in order to identify best practices.

Evolving and inspired workplace community committed to working closely together

The Finnish National Opera and Ballet is a multicultural workplace community that employs top professional from a variety of fields. At the end of 2017, the FNOB's 564 salaried employees represented a total of 35 different nationalities. There are over one hundred different job titles.

During 2017, a large percentage of staff members took part in the preparation of the new strategy by attending challengers' workshops and responding to the values survey carried out among the staff.

The strategy will steer future human resources management because staff development, enthusiasm and commitment to joint efforts were identified in the strategy as necessary preconditions for further development.

We will conduct regular staff appraisal discussions to determine the need for professional skills development. The departments pursue their own training plans while the HR Department assumes responsibility for planning overall managerial training and study circles.

We encourage staff members to look after their own health and working ability. To this end, the FNOB offers versatile occupational healthcare and safety services as well as recreational activities. Occupational healthcare services are provided by a multiprofessional team. Additionally, an extensive network of consultants offers special expertise in music and dance medicine. We also participate in the activities of the Musicians' Clinic, a body of experts representing different fields of medicine.

We have in place an early intervention and working ability model that provides for measures such as monitoring of absenteeism due to illness; action triggers; return-to-work discussions; occupational health care consultations; rehabilitation meetings; working ability assessments; and identification of incapacity-for-work risks. In recognition of the functionality of our model, we were awarded the 2017 annual prize of

the Music Medicine Association. As the prize is awarded to an operator that has made a special contribution in support of musicians' health and working ability, we are justly proud of this achievement.

The goal is to support the working ability of aging employees as comprehensively as possible. As part of these efforts, we initiated in autumn 2015 a three-year Hyrsky project which focuses on the working ability and coping of 50+ employees. As part of Hyrsky, we launched in the 2017–2018 season an internal mentoring model in which 10 experienced employees serve as mentors for 10 new employees. When the Hyrsky project draws to close at the end of 2018, we will determine which of the tested procedures will be adopted as permanent elements in the arsenal of working ability management.

A new scheme adopted last year was the establishment of a workplace mediator network called Tyynne. It includes 12 mediators who seek to address conflicts at an early stage following an agreed-upon procedure.

A documented risk assessment is made of each production to describe the performance-related process in its entirety and evaluate the risks involved. A safety info is then held for all staff participating in the project based on the risk analysis. Accident and emergency exit exercises are held regularly. To prevent occupational accidents, we have in place a procedure for reporting close calls.

Aiming for sustainability and corporate social responsibility in all areas of activity

Sustainability and corporate social responsibility is one of our strategic values. The public funding we receive obligates us to act responsibly in every respect.

Our mission is to serve society as extensively as possible by offering touching opera and ballet experiences of the highest standard for wide range of audiences and age groups all over Finland. At the same time, we are called upon to shoulder our share of responsibility for the renewal and promotion of Finnish culture.

Our human resources management seeks to create a sound and inspiring workplace for all professional groups by treating people equally, transparently and fairly, offering opportunities for continual improvement, promoting staff wellbeing and occupational safety and supporting the ability to cope.

We are active in identifying and minimising the environmental impact of our activities. The objectives for the management of environmental issues are determined in our environmental policy. On 7 November 2017, the FNOB's management team adopted a new environmental policy by which it committed to creating the necessary conditions for attaining the objectives defined in the policy.

New strategy directs development efforts

During 2017, the FNOB's strategy was updated in the course of an extensive strategy development process. It defines our values, core mission and objectives for 2018–2025.







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